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MARAIMALAI ATIKAL: A LONDON BIBLIOGRAPHY

By K. NAMBI AROORAN

THE AIM OF THIS ARTICLE is to present a complete bibliography of the works of Cuvāmi Vētācalam (popularly known as Maṇaimalai Atikal, 1876–1950) which are available at the British Museum (Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts), the India Office Library, and the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.¹ This may be of some help to students of Tamil language and literature and also to persons dealing with the history of the Madras Presidency in the first half of this century. Also included at the end is a list of works of Atikal that are not available in London.

Atikal distinguished himself in various fields of literary activity. Though his fame rests as a great scholar of Tamil language and literature, he was equally well versed in English and Sanskrit.² The author of more than 40 works in Tamil,³ he was his own printer and publisher, running a full-scale printing press at home. It may not be out of place to sketch a brief biography of this great scholar.⁴

Maṇaimalai Atikal was born on 15 July 1876 in a village near the sea-port town Nākapatṭinam (Negapattam) on the Coromandel coast (Cōlāmaṇṭalam). His father's name was Cokkanāṭa Piṭṭai and his mother's name Ciṇṇa Ammai. Cokkanāṭa Piṭṭai was a physician and owned a house at Nākapatṭinam. Atikal had his school education at the Wesleyan Mission High School in Nākapatṭinam. He lost his father when he was ten.

From his childhood, Atikal was by nature deeply religious and pious. He had a great passion for Tamil language and literature. Even as a schoolboy he published articles in Tamil on religious themes in journals like *Nākai Nila Löccanī*, *Pāskara Nāyōtayam*, and *Tirāviṭa Mantiri*. A Society for the Propagation of Hinduism called “*Intu-matāpimāṇa Caṅkam*” was founded at Nākapatṭinam and Atikal took an active part in the affairs of that society. He delivered lectures on topics relating to Hindu religion and morals.

Atikal was not satisfied with his school-learning. His thirst for knowledge was unsatisfiable. Since he greatly desired to make an intensive study of Tamil under a learned pandit, he approached one Nārāyaṇacāmī Piṭṭai, a bookseller in Nākapatṭinam, who had studied Tamil under Mahā Vidvān Miṇakṣicuntaram Piṭṭai of Tiricirāpūram (Trichinopoly). Nārāyaṇacāmī gladly accepted Atikal who underwent a regular course in the study of all important classics in Tamil. Atikal ceased to attend school in the ninth standard and thereafter the knowledge that he gained was acquired by his own efforts.

¹ In the Author Index of the three libraries his works are listed under the name Vētācalam Piṭṭai, R. S. He was also known as Pandit Vētācalam and Nākai Vētācalam Piṭṭai.

² Atikal usually wrote a lengthy English preface to each of his works wherein he gave the gist of the book to enable non-Tamilis to have an idea of it. The Atikalā's *Sākuntala* in Tamil bears testimony to Atikal's knowledge of Sanskrit. Sri Saṅkarācārya of Kāñcipuram Mutt has endowed an annual prize to college students in the name of Atikal for the best essay in Tamil on *Sākuntala*.

³ His major work is *Māṇikkavāčakar varalārum kālamum: St. Māṇikkavāčakar—His life and times*. In the works listed here there are a few pamphlets varying from 4 to 32 pages.

⁴ A complete biography of Atikal in Tamil, *Maraimalai Atikal varalāru* (Madras, 1959), by his son Marai Tirunāvukkarakar, is available at SOAS. T. S. Raghavan's *Makers of modern Tamil* (Madras, 1965) gives a short biography of Atikal and two other Tamil scholars: K. Subramania Pillai and Tiru. Vi. Kaliyanasundaranar. This book is available in the three libraries.

The great Śaiva Siddhānta scholar Cōmacuntara Nāyakar often visited Nākapatṭīnam and delivered lectures on Śaiva Siddhānta. After hearing him Atikal developed a taste for the subject. Cōmacuntara Nāyakar himself was surprised at the intelligence of Atikal when he read some of his articles and asked him to go to Madras to acquire more knowledge.

In 1893, when Atikal was seventeen, he married Cavuntaravalli (1880–1950). They had three daughters and four sons. Atikal met Professor P. Cuntaram Piļlai, the author of the famous Tamil drama *Manōñmaṇiyam*, in 1895 and he in turn was much impressed by Atikal's scholarship. Cuntaram Piļlai recommended the name of Atikal for the post of Tamil Pandit in an English school at Trivandrum. So Atikal started his career as a teacher in Trivandrum but since the climate of the place did not agree with his health, he resigned and returned to Nākapatṭīnam towards the end of 1896.

Cōmacuntara Nāyakar, who was much impressed with Atikal's knowledge of Śaiva Siddhānta, suggested his name to J. M. Nallacāmi Piļlai, who was in need of an editor for the proposed Tamil journal *Cittānta Tipikai*, or *Uṇmaivilakkam*. Atikal accepted the offer and the first number of the journal appeared on the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria, 21 June 1897. But Atikal could not continue because in 1898 he was appointed Lecturer in Tamil at Madras Christian College,⁵ at that time still situated in George Town near the High Court building (later Parry's Corner). He settled his family in Madras city.

Atikal distinguished himself as a teacher by his erudition and soon his students developed a deep love of Tamil. His lessons in grammar were simple and interesting. It was during his lectureship that he published, on the model of English literary criticism, his critical commentaries on two early Tamil classics included in *Pattuppāṭṭu-Mullaippāṭṭu* and *Paṭṭinappālai*.⁶ At the same time Atikal took special lessons in Śaiva Siddhānta under his guru Cōmacuntara Nāyakar. He received a rude shock when his guru passed away in 1901 and composed an elegy in his memory under the title *Cōmacuntara Kāñci*. A few scholars who felt jealous of Atikal's poetic genius made some baseless criticisms of the elegy. Atikal answered those criticisms and published the elegy with a commentary under the title *Cōmacuntara Kāñciyākkam*. Through this his poetic genius was revealed.⁷

In order to work for the renaissance of Tamil language, literature, religion, and culture, Atikal commenced the publication of his own Tamil monthly *Nānacākaram* (the title was later changed to *Arivukkaṭal*) in 1902. Almost all his books were first published in instalments in this journal. Many of them were earlier delivered as presidential addresses in conferences. He successfully published the journal for nearly 40 years against heavy odds.⁸ In 1908 he commenced an English journal, *The Oriental Mystic Myna*, devoted to comparative religion, philosophy, psychic phenomena, occultism, yoga, spiritualism, and history. It ceased publication after ten issues owing to lack of financial support. In 1935 he started

⁵ V. G. Sūriyanārāyaṇa Śāstri (otherwise Paritimārkalaiñar) was then the Professor and Head of the Department of Tamil. K. S. Kōpälācāriyār and W. Mahātēva Mutaliyār were among others in the department.

⁶ It was the period when most of the Cañkam works were brought to light. Atikal took care to compare the palm-leaf versions of these two works and publish a correct version of them.

⁷ Another of Atikal's poetic works is *Tiruvorri Murukar Mummañikkōval*.

⁸ Students of Atikal and many philanthropists provided the capital for many of Atikal's works. Atikal always acknowledged their help in the Preface. Paper scarcity during the two World Wars also delayed many of his publications.

another English journal, *The Ocean of Wisdom*, which was also discontinued after three years because of the lack of subscribers.

On the model of the Arya Samaj and Brahmo Samaj, Atikal founded the Šaiva Siddhānta Mahā Samājam in 1905 to make Šaivism a living religion in the hearts of the Tamils. Branches of the Samājam soon sprang up in different parts of Tamil Nad. Atikal presided over many of its annual conferences. The Samājam is still active in Madras with a Tamil monthly and an English quarterly.

Madras University made the study of Tamil optional in 1911 and Atikal opposed this change in the curriculum. In protest he resigned his lectureship and, once and for all, retired from the teaching profession. He then moved to Pallavaram, a suburb 16 miles south of the city, and built a mansion which later accommodated his own library, printing press, and a temple. The same year Atikal took the vow of renunciation in order to devote his life to the welfare of his fellow men. He never desired to participate in politics or enter subordinate service of any kind for his living. He wanted to be independent in the missionary work which he had planned. This earned him fame as an independent critic without fear or favour.

Atikal showed great devotion towards Rāmalinā Cuvāmikāl (1823–74) and wanted to propagate his concept of Universal Brotherhood. Rāmalinā Cuvāmikāl founded the *Camaraca Caṇmārkka Cāṅkam* in Vaṭalūr near Chidambaram. On the same model Atikal founded the *Camaraca Caṇmārkka Nilaiyam* in April 1911 at his residence. In English he named it "The Sacred Order of Love". Atikal became the Head and Preceptor of the *Nilaiyam*, and gave lessons to his disciples in Tamil literature and Šaiva Siddhānta.⁹

It was in the year 1916 that Atikal decided to use in his writings only words of purely Tamil origin. He felt that the use of foreign words in a language would ultimately lead to its degeneration.¹⁰ So he changed his name from Cuvāmi Vētācalam to Maraimalai Atikal and the *Camaraca Caṇmārkka Nilaiyam* became *Potu Nilaik Kalakam*. His journal *Nānacākaram* came to be called *Ariyukkājal*. Soon many other Tamil scholars and writers followed the example of Atikal and the Pure Tamil Movement gained momentum day after day. "In that way he may be said to have established a school of Tamil thought and writing."¹¹

In order to carry out the missionary work which he had taken upon himself, Atikal undertook extensive lecture tours in South India and Ceylon. He never addressed a meeting without previous preparation. As he himself tells us, his written works were originally delivered as lectures in various meetings. Once he toured North India in connexion with the Hindu Maha Sabha conference at Puri in March 1913. Atikal visited Vijayawada, Bhuvaneshwar, Calcutta, Darjeeling, Benares, Dehra Dun, Delhi, Agra, Bombay, and Secunderabad. He delivered many lectures in English on Hinduism. In 1916 Atikal was invited to South Africa to preside over the Hindu Maha Sabha conference at Durban, but he declined. The Tamils in Ceylon often invited him to deliver religious discourses. He went to Ceylon thrice in the years 1914, 1917, and 1921–2, being provided with passage allowance as well as

⁹ Atikal even had plans to run a Tamil college but there was not enough response for it to be feasible.

¹⁰ Books which were written by Atikal prior to 1916 contained many Sanskrit words. Whenever revised editions of them were issued, Atikal took care to eliminate the Sanskrit words and substitute pure Tamil words. This he mentions in the prefaces that he wrote for them subsequently.

¹¹ P. Arunachalam, *Maraimalai Atikal (1876–1950)—A critical evaluation of his contribution to Tamil culture*, Thesis submitted for the Degree of M.Litt., Annamalai University, June 1960, 320.

a liberal collection for each lecture. In addition, many became his disciples and they continued to send periodic contributions to enable him to publish more and more books. One such person was Tiruvaraṇkam Piṭṭai (1890–1944) of Tirunelvēli, the founder of the South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society at Tirunelvēli (Tinnevelly) and Madras.

Tiruvaraṇkam Piṭṭai requested Atikal to write a commentary on *Tiruvācakam*, for many read the sacred work without understanding its meaning. Atikal agreed to do so and the commentary was published in a series of articles in the monthly journal *Cen Tamil Kaṭaṇciyam*, started in February 1920 by Tiruvaraṇkam Piṭṭai. Atikal's commentary caused a stir among a section of the people. Those who opposed it considered it a blasphemy to write a commentary on the sacred scriptures. They argued that scriptures were beyond the comprehension of the human intellect. But Atikal defended his attempt and showed that at an earlier date many commentators, such as Ilampūraṇār and Parimēlaṭakar, had written commentaries on *Tolkāppiyam* and *Tirukkural*. Similarly commentaries had also appeared on the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, and the *Gita*. Atikal wrote commentaries on the first four parts (*akaval*) only of *Tiruvācakam* and the journal *Cen Tamil Kaṭaṇciyam* ceased publication after twelve issues.

Though Atikal never took an active part in politics, he expressed his sympathies towards the Justice Party, which strove for a just place for non-Brahmans in society. It never desired to introduce any radical change in the religion of the people. Later Atikal was pained to see the Justice Party, under the leadership of E. V. Ramaswami Naicker, turning out to be anti-religious. In a way, it may be said that the Self-respect Movement acted like a catalyst and a rallying point for the devout Hindus. Atikal wrote many articles in journals and addressed many meetings pointing out the evil effects of the anti-religious propaganda of Ramaswami Naicker. In retaliation the *Kuṭiyaracu*, edited by Naicker, published articles condemning Atikal. But in the end Naicker realized his mistake and sought the pardon of Atikal.

Atikal always vehemently opposed the introduction of Hindi as a compulsory language for study in schools and as the administrative language. In 1937 the Congress ministry in Madras under C. Rajagopalachari made the study of Hindi compulsory in the fifth, sixth, and seventh standards. Atikal took an active part in the anti-Hindi movement and delivered lectures pointing out how Tamil would suffer by the introduction of Hindi. The largest meeting that he presided over was the one held at the Triplicane beach on 11 September 1938. E. V. Ramaswami Naicker and many others spoke. Atikal also published a book entitled *Inti potu moliyā?* (*Is Hindi a common tongue?*). Later the government gave up the idea. In 1948 when the government again introduced compulsory Hindi, many protest meetings were held. Atikal presided over one such meeting held at St. Mary's Hall on 17 July 1948.

Most of Atikal's works were written during the years 1920–40. Some of his books were prescribed as texts for the Cambridge and London University examinations taken in Ceylon and the United Kingdom, and for the Intermediate and Degree classes in Madras and Annamalai Universities. There was opposition from some quarters of the Brahmins to his book *Arivuraikkottu*, prescribed as text for the Intermediate classes in Madras University in 1936, because it contained a chapter dealing with the relationship between the Tamils and the people of the West, in which Atikal wanted the non-Brahmans to do away with such

superstitious acts as prostration before Brahman priests called to officiate in religious ceremonies.¹² Atikal refuted the allegations in his English journal *The Ocean of Wisdom* and in *Justice*.

Atikal built up his own library which he named Maṇi mojinūl nilaiyam. The collection exceeded 4,000 volumes and contained many rare books in Tamil, English, and Sanskrit. After a remarkable career he died at the age of 74 on 15 September 1950.

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- Where a work listed is not available in the three libraries the abbreviation "n.a." appears in the catalogue number column.
- Pagination is not given for works running to more than one edition.
- Where there are copies of a given work or edition in two or three of the libraries, the location is given in alphabetical order, viz., British Museum (BM), India Office Library (IOL), School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS).

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pp. 12. Pallavaram, 1918
(A religious pamphlet on temple worship) IOL Tam.B.5221
- Ampikāpati Amarāvati*
pp. 284. Posthumous publication
First edition 1954 n.a.
Second edition 1958 n.a.
Third edition 1964 BM 14171.i.96
(A play based on Cōla history)
- Arivuraik-kottu: Instructive essays*
First edition 1921 (13 essays)
Second edition 1931 (18 essays)
Third edition 1935 n.a.
Fourth edition 1957 n.a.
Fifth edition 1960 (18 essays) SOAS XII.Tam.987(180950)
- Cākuntala nāṭakam: Kālidāsa's Śākuntala translated into Tamil*
First edition 1907 n.a.
Second edition 1933 n.a.
Third edition 1940 (3 copies) SOAS Tam.69(41725)
Reprint 1962 SOAS Tam.69.5(44150)
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XII.Tam.69.3(180800)
- Cātivērrumaiyum pōliccaivarum: Caste and its evils*
pp. 96. Pallavaram
First edition 1911 n.a.
Second edition 1926 IOL Tam.B.3432

¹² *Arivuraik-kottu*, 5th ed., 148–9.

6. *Cintanaik katturaikal: Reflective essays in Tamil adapted from six fine essays of Addison*
 First edition 1908 n.a.
 Second edition 1925 IOL Tam.D.2508
 Third edition 1963 BM 14172.de.89
7. *Cirutēvataikaṭku uyirppaliyīṭalāmā?*
 pp. 12. Pallavaram, 1918 IOL Tam.B.5220
 (A religious pamphlet condemning animal sacrifice)
8. *Cōmacuntarak-kāñciyākkam: An elegy on his master and replies to critics*
 First edition 1901 n.a.
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 Third edition 1941 BM 14171.e.62(2)
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 Third edition 1941 SOAS XII.Tam.984(185692)
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 (Is Hindi a common tongue?)
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 First edition 1933 n.a.
 Second edition 1941 Part I only BM 14172.zc.35
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 pp. 830. Pallavaram, 1930 (one volume) BM 14171.a.101
 pp. 1025. Madras, 1957 (two volumes) BM 14171.aa.138
 pp. 1025. Madras, 1957 (two volumes) SOAS XII.Tam.980(185679)
14. *Maṇitavaciyam allatu ulakiyal olukkam: Personal magnetism or the successful mode of living*
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15. *Maranattin piṇ manitar nilai*
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 (A disquisition on life after death)
16. *Mullaippāṭtu ārāycciyurai: A critical Tamil commentary on Mullaippāṭtu*
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 Second edition 1911 BM 14171.d.2(4)

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Fourth edition 1931	BM	14172.aa.20	
Fourth edition 1931	SOAS	Pam.Tamil D.74144	
Fifth edition 1958	n.a.		
Sixth edition 1962	BM	14172.a.138	
Sixth edition 1962	BM	14172.de.51	
Sixth edition 1962	SOAS	XII.Tam.983(185691)	
17. <i>Murkāla pīrkāla Tamilppulavōr: Ancient and modern Tamil poets</i> pp. 151. Pallavaram, 1936	SOAS	Pam.Tamil B(74049)	
18. <i>Mutar Kural vāta nirākaraṇam</i> pp. 50. Madras, 1898 (A reply to the pamphlet entitled <i>Mutar Kural vātam</i>)	BM	14170.ee.32(2)	
19. <i>Palan Tamil kolkaiyē Šaiva camayam: Šaivism the Tamils' ancient religion</i> pp. 161. Pallavaram, 1930 pp. 161. Pallavaram, 1930	IOL	Tam.B.6136	
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20. <i>Pan̄taikkālat Tamilarum Āriyarum</i> First edition 1906 Second edition 1924-5 (Ancient Tamils and the Aryans)	IOL	n.a. Pam. Tamil D. 1900	
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	BM	14172.aa.10	
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22. <i>Poruntum uṇavum poruntā uṇavum: Proper and improper foods</i> pp. 93 First edition 1921 Second edition 1929	IOL	n.a. Tam.D.3117	
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pp. 32. c. 1930
(A comparison between the Tamils and the people of the West)
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pp. 371. Pallavaram, 1941
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